Washington supreme court slams Monsanto with $185 million verdict for poisoning teachers

11/03/2025 // Cassie B. // **690** Views

Tags: badhealth, Bayer, cancer, cancer causes, chemicals, Dangerous, environ, lawsuit, Monsanto, PCBs, pesticide, poison, progress, toxins

- Washington's Supreme Court reinstated a $185 million verdict against Monsanto.
- The court ruled Missouri law applies, allowing the massive punitive damages award.
- Internal documents proved Monsanto knew of PCB dangers for decades but concealed them.
- The case involves three teachers who were forced to retire due to PCB-induced health problems.
- This verdict is part of a larger litigation involving more than 200 plaintiffs from one school.

The Washington Supreme Court has reinstated a staggering $185 million verdict against chemical giant Monsanto for poisoning three teachers with toxic PCBs at the Sky Valley

Education Center in Monroe. The October 30 ruling, a decisive 6-3 decision, reversed a lower court and delivered long-awaited justice to the educators while exposing a decades-long campaign of corporate deception and negligence by a company that put profits over people. This case pulls back the curtain on a silent, toxic pandemic that is still plaguing American schools and the corporations that caused it.

The legal battle centered on whether Washington state law or Missouri law, where Monsanto was headquartered, should apply. Washington's product liability law includes a 12-year statute of repose that would have shielded Monsanto from these claims. The court's majority, in a sharp rebuke, found that Missouri law must govern the case because all the key decisions about PCB safety and the deliberate failure to warn the public were made within Monsanto's Missouri headquarters.

Chief Justice Debra Stephens wrote for the majority that applying Missouri law was proper, stating, "When a party raises an actual conflict of substantive law, Washington courts apply the law of the state with the most significant relationship to that particular issue." The ruling emphasized that Monsanto sold PCBs in "every state" and could not have relied on a Washington statute enacted years after it stopped producing the chemical. This critical legal finding allowed the jury's punitive damages award to stand, punishing Monsanto for its egregious misconduct.

The evidence presented at trial painted a damning picture of a corporation fully aware of the dangers it was unleashing. Internal Monsanto documents revealed that its own scientists confirmed the toxic effects of PCB exposure as early as the 1930s. Despite this knowledge, the company continued to manufacture and sell the chemicals until 1977, all while concealing the risks from the public and regulators.

The three teachers, Kerry Erickson, Michelle Leahy and Joyce Marquardt, were forced to retire due to devastating health problems they suffered after years of exposure to PCBs leaking from the school's fluorescent light fixtures. They are just a few of the more than 200 teachers, students, and parents from the same school who have filed suit, reporting a horrifying array of health issues including neurological damage, autoimmune disorders, memory problems, and chronic illness.

The corporate cover-up continues

Monsanto, now owned by the German pharmaceutical conglomerate Bayer, continues its pattern of denial and obstruction. Following the ruling, Bayer issued a statement criticizing the court, claiming the decision was "wrong and contrary to the U.S. Constitution because the rulings unlawfully discriminate against out of state companies doing business in Washington." This is the same corporation that, in a separate matter, reached a $650 million settlement with municipalities over PCB contamination, proving its willingness to pay to make problems go away while refusing to admit guilt.

Bayer has defensively argued that schools, not the company, are responsible for addressing PCB-containing products in their facilities. This attempt to shift blame onto the very institutions and individuals its product poisoned is a classic tactic of a corporation caught in its own web of lies. The company is appealing the verdicts, fighting tooth and nail to avoid responsibility for the permanent damage inflicted on innocent children and educators.

The plaintiffs' attorneys celebrated the ruling as a watershed moment. Nick Rowley, co-founder of Trial Lawyers for Justice, called it a "monumental victory not just for these teachers, but for every community still suffering the consequences of Monsanto's toxic legacy." He rightly identified PCBs as a "silent pandemic" in America's public schools.

Attorneys Rick Friedman and Deepak Gupta stated that the decision "sends a clear message: companies that conceal the risks of toxic chemicals must be held accountable." They also noted the ruling's immediate impact, affecting over 40 other cases on appeal involving $1.6 billion in judgments against the company.

This case is part of a massive wave of litigation holding Monsanto and Bayer accountable for the persistent environmental and health catastrophe caused by PCBs. These chemicals were banned in 1979 but persist in the environment for many years, building up in the bodies of humans and wildlife. A 2016 study found that as many as 26,000 U.S. school buildings may still contain PCB-contaminated materials, meaning this crisis is far from over.

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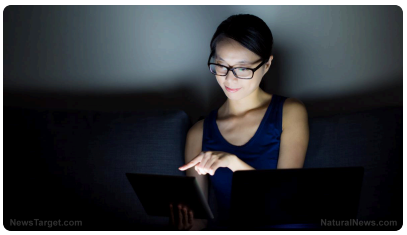

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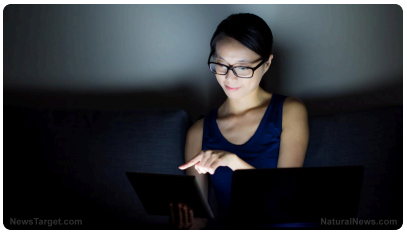

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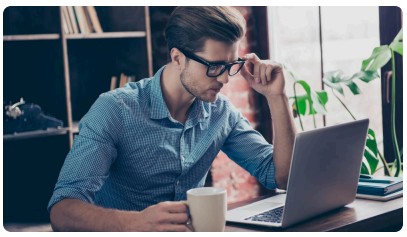

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